

Developing the Urban Workforce: Notes From the Field

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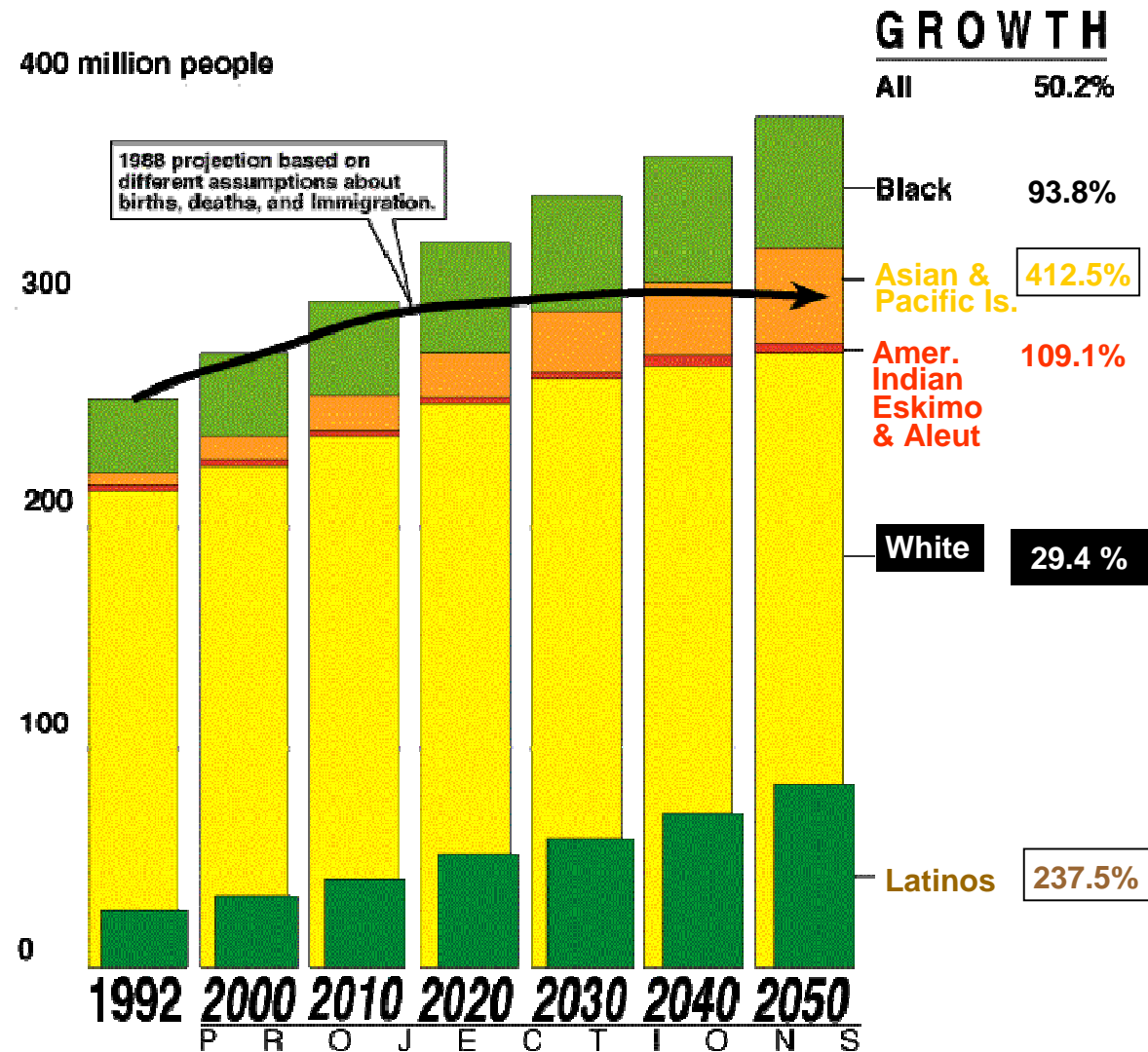
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The Demographic Context: U.S. Racial/Ethnic Growth*



* America is becoming more diverse, especially in urban areas

The Context of the Urban Unemployed

- **National Trends**

- **Overall increase in economic and social decline in urban areas**

- **Decrease in earnings (low-wage jobs are proliferating)**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **National Trends (cont'd)**
 - **Reduction in federal and state funding for community-based organizations (CBOs) that have served as “mediating institutions” for youth in low-income/underclass communities**
 - **Refocus of job-training programs: emphasis on placement instead of training, and reduction in funding (resulting in high un- and under-employment)—NEW WELFARE REGS.**
 - **NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING OF “URBAN RESIDENTS!”**
 - **Deindustrialization and employment deconcentration in urban communities - - outsourcing of jobs overseas**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Local Community Context**
 - **Policy orientation *vis-à-vis* the well-being of children**
 - **availability of youth-serving agencies and recreational outlets**
 - **after-school programs**
 - **teen curfews**
 - **Black/Latino community's relationship with the “police department” and criminal justice system**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Neighborhood Context**
 - Level of **CONCENTRATED POVERTY** (40% or more of residents in a census tract living below in poverty)
 - **SPATIAL ISOLATION** from mainstream society
 - **"SOCIAL POVERTY:"** isolation and re-enforcement of negative behavioral factors, and lack of positive mentors, role models, recreational outlets,

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Neighborhood Context (cont'd)**
 - **Crime patterns**
 - **Percent of fathers in-home**
 - **Number of ex-offenders living in neighborhood**
 - **Percent of female-headed households in poverty**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Family Context**

- **Percent of female-headed v. two-parent families**
- **WHETHER OR NOT FAMILY WAS TEEN-PARENTED!**
- **PERCENT OF “NON-PARENT” FAMILIES!**
- **Education level of family member(s), i.e., parent, guardian, etc.**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Family Context (cont'd)**
 - **Role Models, positive or negative**
 - **Extended family support or non-support (Village is broken)**
 - **Family economic status**
 - **Family values (ascertained via interviews and observations)**
 - **Incarcerated family members**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **School Context**

- **School resources** (i.e., **teacher quality**, facilities, etc.)
- **Representation of minorities in “special education”**
- **Socioeconomic, family, neighborhood, context of school peers**
- **Suspension and Expulsion rates of students of color (especially males)**
- **School district success in educating students of color over a specified time period (e.g., 5 years)**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Peer Group Contexts**

- **Extent of being surrounded by peers who are engaged or socialized in positive activities**
- **Recruitment into negative peer groups (youth gangs, other youth engaged in antisocial, illegal activities)**
- **PEER GROUP INFLUENCES IN LIVES OF YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Individual Attributes**
 - **Physical neglect and sexual abuse**
 - **Alcohol and drug issues**
 - **Pre-natal deficits (if any)?**
 - **Access to health care**
 - **Mental health/psychological history?**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Social Capital Resources**
 - **Receipt of emotional support**
 - **Process of developing of social identity - -
POSITIVE or NEGATIVE**
 - **Institutional support (Churches, CBOs, etc.)**
 - **Extended family support, neighborhood support**
 - **Access to mainstream information for
employment**

The Context of the Urban Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Cultural Capital Resources**

- **Morals (how developed)**
- **Values (how shaped)**
- **Attitude (toward mainstream behaviors)**
- **Character (influences on)**

- **Ability to Code Switch**

- **Adapting to the norms of different environments in terms of: speech, dress, social interaction, values, etc.**

THESE CONTEXT ELEMENTS MUST BE THOROUGHLY UNDERSTOOD PRIOR TO MOVING THE URBAN POOR TO WORK

The “Plus” Factors for Moving Forward

- **Mayoral “Leadership” on Poverty**
- **Corporate Investment in the City**
- **Commitment of Faith Institutions**

Workforce Development Examples for Hard-Core Unemployed

- **1988 MMAC, GMC, and Black CBO Workforce Initiative**
 - **OIC as the major job training anchor**
 - **SDC coordinating social support programs**

OIC never developed an effective jobs program for the hard-core unemployed, despite receiving nearly \$1billion in city, county, state, and federal funding from 1988-2004

- **1992 Youth Program Collaboration: New Concept, CYD, MCCH (around issues of teen pregnancy, etc.)**

The State of Wisconsin provided funds for the joint venture, but the agencies were unable to cooperate in “teen pregnancy prevention” in an overlapping service area

Workforce Development Examples for Hard-Core Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Freeing *The Prisoners of Welfare* and New Hope Project+**
 - **Accepting that some cannot work**
 - **Subsidizing part-time workers**
 - **Wage supplement via (*EITC*) to get families with dependent children above the poverty line**

Although the policies were implemented, funding was never provided at the scale necessary

Workforce Development Strategies for Hard Core Unemployed

- Addressing inadvertent “Contact Discrimination”
 - **MOVING BEYOND SERVING THE “RICH POOR”**
 - Targeting **TEEN PREGNANCY** like a laser beam!
 - Lessons from Charles Young and Samuel McClain beatings
- **In-kind** community support and nurturing of the “hard-core disadvantaged” by churches, sororities, lodges, fraternities, and civic and business groups in communities of color—a continuous “Bum Rush!”
- **WHEN THE VILLAGE WAS STRONGEST, IT HAD NO GRANT!**

Workforce Development Strategies for Hard-Core Unemployed (cont'd)

- **Develop a “PovStat” (like Comstat) System to track progress in reducing poverty and increasing employment in Milwaukee’s most distressed census tracts**
- **Reduce REDUNDANCY in programs serving Milwaukee’s poor and **MEASURE impact!****
- **Assign, **collaboratively**, an existing organization/agency to “pull the trigger!”**

MOVING THE HARD-CORE INTO THE WORKFORCE

